
The final degree project as an opportunity in the initial teacher training for the inclusive education

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General description of the context, objectives

In this paper we present a formative proposal that is framed in the development of the final degree project (FDP). We understand it as an opportunity in training for inclusive education. We stop to analyze the main phases of development, activities and strategies of reflection carried out. We exemplify the formative proposal through the case of a student of early childhood education degree of the University of Cantabria (Spain). We will present the main impacts of this proposal in her initial training for inclusive education.

At the International Conference of UNESCO, the need to review and improve initial teacher training for inclusive education was emphasized. We point out as Rouse (2010) the need to develop the responsibility and teacher competence to make the learning activities accessible to all students.

The changes made in the initial teachers training by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) are presented as an opportunity for improvement. Among them, we highlight the incorporation of FDP (Reynolds and Thompson, 2011) as an opportunity to develop the ability to design, develop and assess inclusive educational proposals in future teachers (Echeita and Perez, 2010). As Todd, Smith & Bannister (2006) point out, the FDP offers space and time for students to put into dialogue the knowledge acquired in the different subjects. This avoids presenting the contents of inclusive education separate from those of other subjects.

At the University of Cantabria (Spain), the degree of early childhood and primary education includes the development and defense of a Final Degree Project (FDP) that student must develop in the last year of their studies (6 credits). In the case exemplified, the student carried out the design, development and evaluation of an experience of peer tutoring in a early childhood class (22 students of 4 years old) for literacy learning in a public school in Cantabria during 2015-2016 academic year.

It should be noted that the classroom is organized into working groups of student, except for two of them who have difficulties in learning, which are located in adjacent teacher space.

In short, the formative proposal of FDP described is based on: the principles of inclusive education (Ainscow & Miles, 2008); the theoretical and methodological approaches of the EHEA; and the student voice movement in the co-curriculum construction (Bovill, Cook-Sather & Felten, 2011). While we aim to achieve the following objectives:

- Develop an ethical commitment according with the principles of justice, equality, democracy and social and educational inclusion.
- Analysis of educational practice through the keys of inclusive education.
- Incorporate and implement the knowledge of in the design, development and assessment of educational experiences designed accessible to all students, including those with learning difficulties.

Activities and instruments description

The FDP starts when the student identifies and defines its educational interest linked to the classroom where it develops its practices. To do this, it becomes a participant observer of the educational activity for 3 weeks. With the field notes taken during observations, the student prepares a teacher diary which reflects on the main actions, activities, strategies and methodology from the characteristics of inclusive education. After this process, the first working seminar with the director of the FDP is developed for the purpose to reflect, analyze and negotiate about the main observations. These include: the dif-

ficulties to design learning activities for all students; the contradiction to situate the students in groups but choose individual educational activities; or the situation of students with more difficulties in the class activity. This dialogue takes student to define their interest. In the exemplified case the implementation of cooperative learning experience (peer tutoring). Once identified the object of the FDP, the process of design, development and evaluation of the experience begins. To do so, they carry out the following activities:

1. Working Seminars (Seale, Nind, Tilley & Chapman, 2015) with the director of the FDP. This strategy was different purpose depending of each experience.

- a. Design of experience. Three seminars were carried out for the purpose to research, discuss and, in a deliberative process of decisions making, define the phases of experience based on the principles of inclusive education. To do this, students have conducted a process of reading literature, analysis and definition of dilemmas presented in previous experiences. In the case exemplified, we can highlight the following dilemmas: the selection and creation of couples of peer tutoring to meet the criteria of heterogeneity and the designing of the training process accessible to all students.

- b. Development of the experience (8 weeks). Due to the educational activity is carried out in a complex social space, it is frequently that some dilemmas arise in the development of a experience. These became the object of reflection and redefinition through a dialogical process between students, teacher and director. Among the main dilemmas of ex-

ample we find: excessive directivity teacher during the activity class or difficulties of some students to offer and reclaim help.

c. Assessment of experience (1 week). Students must design the assessment process which it has three focus: the design and development of the experience; the student learning through a self-evaluation of students and evaluation by teachers; and a self-assessment of their role as teacher development experience. Continuing its role as protagonist, they must design different assessment instruments. This student chose: questionnaire, field notes and an interview with the teacher.

2. Coordination meetings with the classroom teacher. During this process of development the FDP, student should have weekly meetings with the classroom teacher in order to constitute a group of teachers (Graden and Bauer, 2001). In them, they analyzed collaboratively the actions and processes carried out according to the principles of the inclusive education.

3. Elaboration of a report and public defense of the FDP. Finally, students write the report on the experience and presented in a public ceremony the main features and conclusions.

Results achieved, materials developed

The formative proposal of FDP described is presented as an opportunity for initial training for inclusive education, where future teachers incorporate their professional development

educational strategies in order to create communities where all students are accepted, recognized and found the necessary support for their learning.

Firstly, this formative proposal offers a space to students to plan, develop and assess experiences according to the principles of the inclusive education (Echeita & Perez, 2010). This proposal goes beyond traditional educational activities of the university which restrict student action to the design (without the possibility to develop), and students is faced to the complexity and diverse of the learning activity.

Secondly, this formative proposal allow student during their FDP to develop a protagonist role in their training process and begin to build their own knowledge based on experience (Bovill, Cook-Sather & Felten, 2011).

Thirdly, we find the opportunity that students incorporate processes and strategies according with inclusive education: (1) through observation and elaboration of the teacher diary, students analyze educational processes and design inclusive pedagogical alternatives allowing them to make use of strategies and knowledge acquired during the degree. (2) The FDP is an academic work that relates different contexts (faculty of education and school) for this it offers students the opportunity to work with professionals of different profiles forming a group of teachers who collaboratively facing the development of inclusive practices (Graden and Bauer, 2001). This team work is characterized by dialogue, reflection and shared decision making. (3) Due to the FDP is developed according with inclusive education principles, students develop educational experiences aimed at all students (Rouse, 2010) where chil-

dren are valued, recognized and respected paying special attention to those who have been traditionally excluded. Consequently, the proposal of FDP should be designed according with a common curriculum where the necessary supports are offered to all students to avoid to reduced the curriculum for students with difficulties.

Finally, the formative proposal concludes with the elaboration of a report and public defense of the experience. This is an opportunity in order to students reflect about the main dilemmas and educational strategies implemented in the process of design, development and assess. This report becomes in a good practice guide.

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